

# IS THE VOGUE OF THE ANTIQUE ABOUT TO PASS?

Yes, Declare the Supporters of the New Decorative Art Movement in France, Among Whom Is Doucet

PARIS, November 1. Is the vogue for collecting antiques passing? Is the interest that has been concentrated therein about to be transferred to the cultivation of a new style of decoration? That this is happening is the opinion of the most vigorously progressive artistic group in Paris, several members of which have already suited the action to the word in entering the field.

There is no longer a king in France to further the arts by his patronage and set his seal of approval upon a certain style, but wealthy men are now awakening to a theme in which artists have for some time been absorbed and by their orders for special designs are opening up a wider field than existed in the old days.

Not many months ago all Paris was astir over the dispersing of one of its most famous collections of antiques, that of Jacques Doucet. The question "For what reason?" has often been asked. I had recently the good fortune of finding myself in conversation with M. Doucet and lost no time in putting to him the oft repeated query. His answer was the preface to several interesting conversations on the same subject which I have had in the last few days. Remember in reading his words that there is a greater connoisseur of decoration than this man who has spent his life collecting, studying, surrounded by the treasures of the artistic past.

For some time M. Doucet said he had been drawn toward a study of the Impressionist painters and their successors, the so-called Post-Impressionists. The best work by these artists attracted him by the beauty of its strength so much more than the works of the past that he gradually experienced a change in his principles. He realized that in estimating the value of the art of the past he, like many others, had been misled. The defect of modern decoration lay in this fury of things of the past, their collecting and copying, leaving no time for developing an art of the present day.

When the "bel age" of Greece was

cross in several historic houses lent for the purpose to that indefatigable organizer the Countess de Greffuhle. The idea, carried out too hurriedly for the best results, gave a somewhat more popular impetus through the few surprises it contained to a movement which had already a strong following in certain quarters.

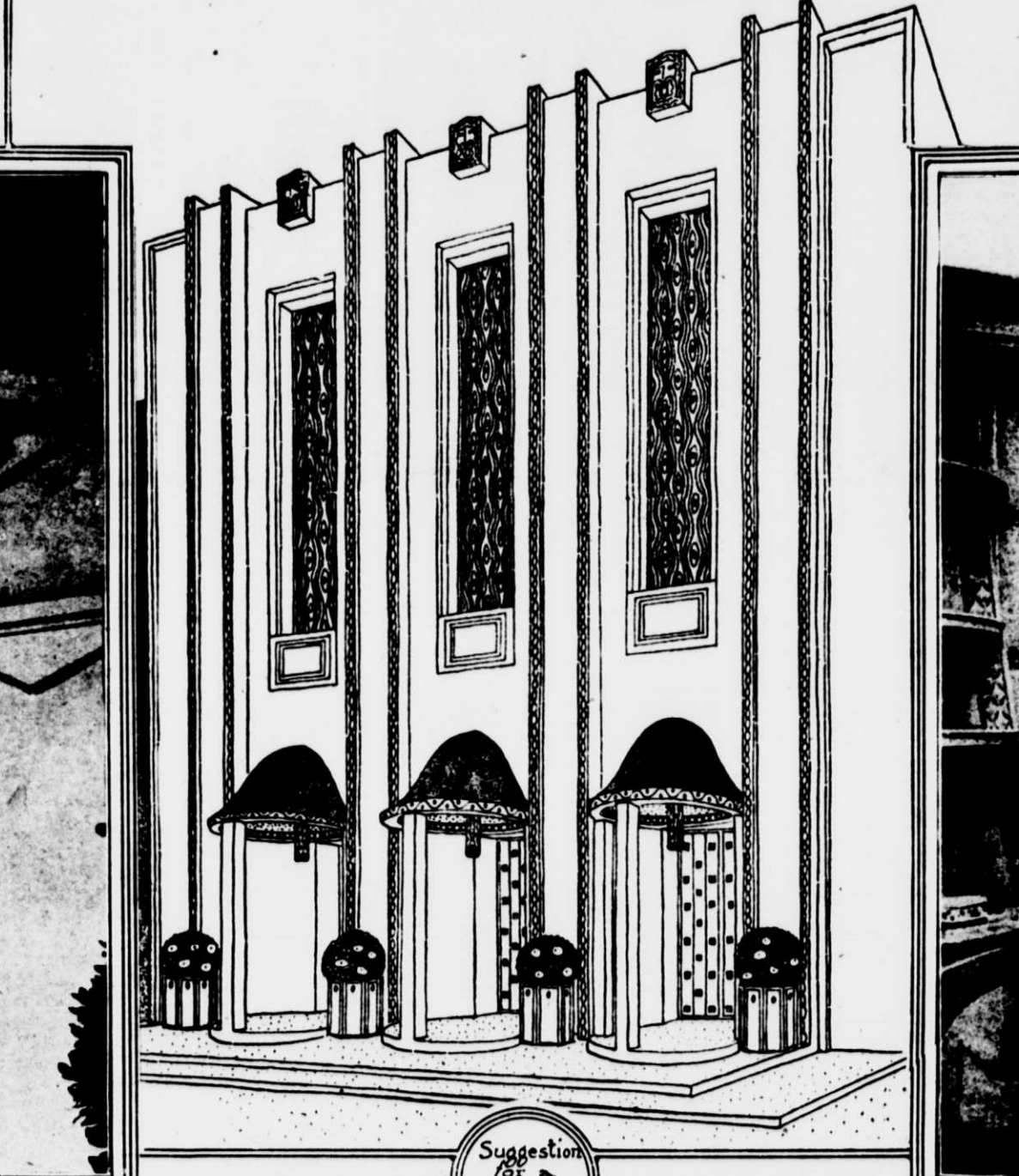
First of all, the movement has nothing to do with art nouveau; it might be said to be in reaction or opposition to that unhappy phase if elsewhere than in jewelry enough importance had ever been given it by serious people to warrant such an assertion. Inasmuch as strength rather than weakness and suppression of ornament rather than its cultivation—although legitimate ornament is necessarily not effaced—are the chief points aimed at by these seekers of a new style.

No architecture, either of interior or exterior, has suffered like the French from the valuing of ornamentation over construction, and it is therefore natural that the most vigorous movement in an opposite direction should emanate from it.

The French decorative movement is of a much higher and more serious order than that of Munich, with which it has nothing in common. In its effort for strength the Munich school seems to sacrifice almost everything else; if ugliness is strength its products generally have the result in their square lines and strong colors. All the Frenchmen with whom I have talked about the new movement use tradition as their base; with the Germans the bizarre seems to be the goal.

An amusing story is told by a wealthy Frenchman who called in a designer of the Munich school to make him a dining table. Shortly after the man brought him a design for a table that swung from the ceiling on chains, the motion of which would uncomfortably recall eating on board ship.

There is at present at the Salon d'Automne an excellent chance to compare the work of the French designers with that of the more talked of German school, which gave an exhibition at the same place two years ago. The Ger-



New Style Dining Room • •

tenth of its kind, has been lauded by its academic rivals for the control of its anarchistic tendencies, its approach to self-discovery—the decorator's moment.

The manners and customs of our times naturally lead us to the severe; an approach to neo-Greek was noticeable to M. Sue in the style to which we seem to drift, necessarily an outcome of the Empire, the last pure style of decoration in France. The strength of present day painting has compelled attention after the softness of the era

Interesting Specimens of the Work—Latest School of Interior Ornamentation Shown at the Autumn Salon

and details. The color of the room is rich blue; the furniture, beautiful in its discreet carving, is painted gray and blue. The facade of the house by Duchamp Villon, in which this exhibit is shown, has caused much comment among architects and artists who count it the feature of the entire exhibition, though not the most perfect piece of work.

In printed hangings is perhaps found the nearest approach to perfection of the new movement. Some of the printed window muslins and cretonnes, of beautiful weave, are splendid in their interpretation of a natural motif in which an artistic avoidance of direct copying is one of the chief characteristics. Paul Polret, under the name of Martine, has given a surprise in the beauty of five or six designs out of an exhibit a little too large for its own success. This remarkable adapter seems to have found his real expression in interior decorating; little does it matter that the finest of his color schemes are borrowed from Leon Bakst.

While they have carefully avoided the

too great effort for strength of the German colorists in the rich, clear color of many of their schemes, the Sue group as they are called, are ever ready to acknowledge the inspiration given them by those wonderful stage settings of M. Diaghilev's ballet.

Which brings us to the Theatre des Arts. No reference to the present subject would be complete without an acknowledgment of what M. Roullet, its proprietor, has done in furtherance of an important branch of the movement: the creating of a modern style of French theatre decoration. Certain of his interior settings have, in their necessarily curtailed manner, been full of a fine suggestion. The best, by Maxime de Thomas, have led Doucet to the engagement of this artist for the designing of furnishings for his new home. M. de Thomas (himself a wealthy man and until recently a collector) works out his design; he is surrounded by the finest examples of a past art, which he says are invaluable in firing his ambition to surpass them in beauty.

## MR. NEW YORKER ABROAD

"Ah, is this Mr. Wilkins?" inquired the visitor in a small town, grasping the other's hand with a jerking, nervous shake. He was portly in the equatorial region, had carefully trimmed side whiskers, wore a \$4 tie and had the air of a man of authority. Being assured that it was Mr. Wilkins, the newcomer continued: "I am Mr. New Yorker of the office of Mr. Norton, president of the National Wholesale Company. I've dropped in here on a little visit while on a hurried and extended Western trip to have a little conference about our shipping arrangements. Mr. Norton was very anxious to have me see you and talk it over."

Mr. Wilkins greeted the visitor cordially and sat him in a big comfortable chair. The New Yorker seemed anxious to talk.

"Yes, you know, Mr. Norton is president," he said, "but he is such a busy man, has so many other interests, that I, being his confidential man, have to take over the active executive work of his office for the most part. Wonderful business, the National Wholesale Company. So much letter writing alone that we have fifty dictaphones."

lector of old furniture and all that sort of thing. I never could see much use in gathering it up, securing all over the world for just what you want, spending a lot of money for it; but it amuses her and as long as she derives any pleasure from it I've no kick coming.

"I was quite surprised, though, on returning home the other day to find that she had picked up a genuine Louie XIV. from the Chateau d'Orreux in France and a genuine Henry VIII. from the Eversham Castle in England. Got 'em in a little store on a side street in New York. Absolutely authentic record. I tell you, you can find anything in little old New York if you just know where to look for it."

"There's a big duty on these things. Is there much agitation over here about the tariff? It's a serious problem. What a big farce this American Government of ours is any way! Some of these days a mob will form, march right through Broadway and swoop down on the Capitol at Washington and take possession. It's quite possible."

"You have a fairly good street car system here for the place. The subway's the thing in New York. Seventy-five miles of it altogether. Will cost \$300,000,000."



Reception Room Furnishings.

Cubist Art in a Doorway Facade • •

surrounded by its colored statues all was fresh and gay. The Marquise de Compadour and Marie Antoinette and Josephine made their coiffures and their plays and divorces in scenes that were bright and new as well as sumptuously fashioned. To be surrounded constantly by a setting that requires just and moth holes to make its beauty complete, Doucet finds, is to be exposed to a weakening moral influence. Make the things of the present as beautiful as those of the past; in that respect only copy them. Forget the quantity, think of the quality of the output; correct, in other words, the crying sin of the day. (This last from a Frenchman to Frenchmen. What would he say to our factories in Michigan?) Seek for a thing of beauty, not a new style; the new style will find itself. The beauty of antiques, when they have no special personal association, is seen to best advantage in museums, where they may be consulted. Every new style is an outgrowth of another, following the needs of the day.

M. Doucet is occupying himself with the creation of new furnishings for his great apartment, which is now empty save for a bed and a bathtub. Curiously enough, at just about the time of the Doucet sale of antiques an interesting loan exposition of modern French arts and crafts was in progress

man exhibition attracted interest, but certainly there were few among the settings that one would wish to live in. In the details there was much that was good and original and, I think, of profit to the French. Some plans by Rob Mallet-Stevens, consistently in the Munich style, give a still nearer illustration of the ends of the two schools.

Out of the thirty or more designs for rooms at the Salon there are two or three that give real promise. It is a disappointment that the pioneer of the entire movement, the architect, Louis Sue, is not exhibiting this year.

It appears his plans could be carried out only by pushing, and perfection in such things, according to this brilliant young enthusiast, is very slowly arrived at. A French art critic's recent reference to the "feverish search" for a style has deeply offended.

Now that the Salon rooms are at last completed the viewpoint of the Decorative Art Group begins to make itself apparent. Many people feel that the talk of a "new style," which is now occupying Paris, will soon be changed to "the new style."

Its most accepted authority, whom I found in his office on the Quai Voltaire, is very hopeful. According to M. Sue the moment has arrived when something should be done in the field of decoration.

This present Salon d'Automne, the

preceding; the seeking for definition is a sure indication of the stability of the movement. But he does not think all that is being done at present is beyond criticism, though it is certainly inclining toward the development of a rich, simple style.

A good point brought out was that the finely composed and fashioned modern article should be able to take its place in a room beside the most distinguished objects of another age. This well defines the discretion of the viewpoint. M. Sue thought the right man

may discover the thing in Cubism. Do not start! Cubism is the generalized term for harmony of line—not necessarily in cubes. For that reason he found the so-called Cubist room by Andre Mare (which had no more cubes in it than a picture by Cezanne, the patron saint of the Cubist) the most interesting of the exhibit, the most perfect in its harmony of line and color.

The theme in this room is the Ionic volute, simplified in the furniture, played upon in every variation in the hangings

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"I see in your daily paper here that they are raising Cain over the parcel post. That's another big fake scheme. Not New York need of it any way; you have parcels delivered promptly at low cost anywhere in New York city. Great system of corporations there."

"I hope it doesn't rain. I've got to make a long Western trip—going clear to Pittsburgh, you know. Ever been that far West? Ought to run over to Denver and Milwaukee—wife's relatives live there—but I can't spare the extra day. We New Yorkers are kept on the jump, you know."

"Speaking of rain: some of these days some fellow will invent a system to control the water fall of the country—lift the water from the bay and sprinkle it over New York just when needed, you know. Big cry ahead, but science is making remarkable strides and you never can tell."

"Ah, boy. Ring for a taxi for me, will you. What? No taxi system? Rotten. Well, one may expect such when one gets into a provincial town like this. How do you get along, Mr. Wilkins?"

"Awfully glad I've had this little business talk with you, Mr. Norton very anxious about it. Hope our business relations will be closer and more intimate. Glad indeed to have had this talk about your town; I am able to understand your situation over here exactly and I'll lay it right before Mr. Norton. Even in New York come right to my house first thing. Mrs. New Yorker will be delighted to entertain you. Good day."